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The Gen X Guide to Hiring Millennials

Sometimes it feels like Generation X gets lost in the white noise between the Baby Boomers and the Millennials. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1984, were referred to as the Slacker Generation by periodicals of the 90s and our lazy lifestyle was portrayed in movies like 1992's Singles. Grunge was soundtrack to our teen years, and we have never really given up on the rebellious nature of our youth.

But it didn't take long for companies to embrace the attitude of GenX. In fact, it was our generation that birthed the Silicon Valley boom, which employs many Millennials today. GenX isn't lazy, we're just uninterested in doing things the way they've always been done just for the sake of consistency.

For a manager firmly in Generation X, things have changed a lot now that the oldest millennials are in their late 30s. GenX adults are no longer on the cutting edge, and now we find ourselves in positions of management throughout technology. And when it comes to making a hiring decision based on the younger generation in the workforce, it can be easy to fall into old patterns like the Baby Boomers before us, unable to grasp what makes the next generation click.

In this guide, we'll discuss some of the things GenX managers should know before hiring and managing millennials in their workforce. These include:

- Flexible schedules.
- Long term career development.
- Regular feedback.
- Shared purpose.
- Community involvement.
- Collaborative environments.
- Diverse coworkers.

Let's have a closer look at each of these expectations for your millennial employees.

Flexible Schedules

You're probably thinking you would like this too, and you'd be right. The truth is, it was Generation X that brought the idea of flexible schedules to the workplace as a response to the traditional model to begin with. It is no surprise that this has become the norm for millennial employees who have grown up seeing flexibility as something they can attain.

The trap you need to avoid as a manager is not taking on too much of an authoritarian persona. You invented flexibility so you didn't have to be like the previous generation. Don't turn into them just because you have the power now. Create a flexible schedule plan that accounts for commute times, work from home options, and results oriented performance evaluations rather than focusing on the time spent sitting in one place.

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Long Term Career Development

Your younger employees are also looking for an opportunity to develop their career. They're not happy staying within the same role for an extensive period of time. While they might not be able to climb the corporate ladder over the course of a single year, they do want to have added responsibilities along the way.

Don't hesitate to reward their competence with more tasks. Show that you value their contribution by giving them additional duties suited to their specific talents. This will encourage them to stay with you rather than find a new position somewhere else that can offer a change of pace in the short term.

Regular Feedback

As much as our generation is known for being latchkey kids, the millennials faced a very different upbringing. Partially in retaliation to the excessive amounts of independence forced upon GenX as they grew up, Millennials experienced the phenomenon of helicopter parenting. Now there is an expectation that they can't function without the help of older, wiser adults.

This stereotype isn't entirely true, but there are some aspects that apply. What your millennial employees are looking for is constant feedback and reinforcement. And not just corrective suggestions, but positive encouragement for their job well done. Incorporating this into your management style will keep them happy and engaged. You can do this by maintaining constant communication. You can still manage in a hands-off way to avoid micromanagement, but up your communication game across the board.

Shared Purpose

These young employees also want to know that what they're doing makes a difference. They want to feel as though they're working for a company or corporation that shares similar values overall. The best way to communicate this is to know what your company stands for and live that each and every day. What is your mission, what are your values, and how do you convey that in the work you do?

Encourage your millennial employees to have buy-in for the long term goals and increase their performance. Show how these implications are far-reaching beyond the day to day functions. Include them in the decision making process and make them feel like their contribution matters.

Community Involvement

In a similar way, millennial employees also want to work for community minded organizations. They want to see that their employer cares about more than just the bottom line. Having a corporate mission

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beyond just the product or services you're selling will go a long way to encouraging young employees to remain loyal to your company.

You can enforce this by developing a volunteering program that you team can participate in while they work with your company. Offer green initiatives to demonstrate your interest in preserving the environment for future generations. Talk to them about how they want to give back to the community in general. By showing your community involvement, you'll begin to attract the top talent from the millennial generation.

Collaborative Environments

Another common trait talked about when it comes to millennials is their need for a collaborative environment. At its most negative, this attribute is often described as a "participation trophy." The stereotype is that millennials were raised to believe that participation was more important than winning, and this trickles down to their work ethic.

Again, the blanket statement isn't true of everyone but there is some benefit to encouraging a collaborative environment between your younger employees. In this sense, two heads are often better than one and by encouraging collaboration rather than fostering competition, you will find that you can drive innovation from your most creative employees.

Diverse Coworkers

One aspect of millennial culture that is a firm benefit for the workplace overall is the expectation of diversity. This generation thrives in environments where diversity is a focus. And diversity doesn't just mean race and sex. Diversity affects the very way a company or department thinks about the work they perform. By bringing in people with a variety of different backgrounds, you're only enhancing the ability for your team to succeed.

Some experts describe this as focusing on "culture add" rather than "culture fit." Hiring for company culture is important because you want to make sure that each new team member can work well with your existing team. But take that one step further and determine what each new hire can add to your company.

Conclusion

You have come a long way to achieve your management position in spite of the previous generation's stereotypes of your age group. You are far from a slacker, but don't forget the ways you wanted to change the workplace to conform to your most important values.

With these tips, you can give your younger employees the same chance you had to prove yourself and succeed. With flexible schedules, long term career development, regular feedback, a shared sense of

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purpose, community involvement, collaborative environments, and diversity in your workforce you've created a situation attractive for driven millennials so you can make smart hiring decisions.