

Ideas for Enhancing Engagement and Teamwork Among All Four Generations of Workers

Compiled by Leigh Branham

For Millennials (born 1981-1995):

- Trust new hires with challenge and responsibility, including special assignments.
- Create an internship program that focuses on giving them meaningful work.
- Let interns come up with their own training topics and invite senior staff to attend and take part in discussions.
- Appoint on-boarding sponsors to make contact with new hires prior to their first day on the job.
- During the on-boarding process make expectations perfectly clear with regard to the work effort needed to serve the client. Emphasize that sacrifices of personal time, and evening/weekend work may be required. In return, make every effort to reward and recognize those who do make the sacrifices.
- Appoint buddies or mentors during the critical first 90 days.
- Involve parents in on-boarding of new hires or invite them to a company open house.
- Give frequent feedback during their first 30 days.
- Require younger staff to give frequent presentations to get them out of their dependence on electronic communication and to gain practice and more comfort with spoken communication.
- Ask senior staff to initiate more face-to-face communication with them.
- Train all managers in performance coaching, feedback, and recognition best practices.
- Create group mentoring, where one senior leader meets periodically with multiple Millennial protégés.
- Allow them some time to talk and socialize with coworkers, understanding that it makes them more engaged, not less.
- Allow them to request a performance review at any time during their first 90 days on the job.
- Use strength and personality assessment instruments to increase self-awareness.
- Provide ample opportunities for learning in a variety of media-on-line, via pod-casts/thumb-drives, over lunch-and-learns, in classes, and from varied work experiences.
- Involve them in more direct contact with internal and external customers so they better understand why their jobs are important.
- Set up office spaces to facilitate social interaction and exchange of ideas.
- Assign work stations in closer proximity to more senior employees.
- Awarding quarterly bonuses instead of, or in addition to, annual bonuses.
- Change long-term compensation incentive plans so that pay-offs take effect after shorter time periods.
- Provide longer vacations after shorter lengths of service.

For Gen-Xers (born 1965-1980):

- Create opportunities to move cross-functionally and provide rotational and other special assignments, especially when the path to promotion is blocked.

- Assign them new challenges at least once every three years.
- Expand their job scope and responsibility whenever possible.
- Provide tuition reimbursement.
- Conduct assessment and training seminars for emerging leaders among them.
- Involve them in succession management discussions.
- Allow flexible hours whenever possible as long as the work gets done.
- Consider offering paid time off as an alternative to pay-based incentives.
- Reward those who make personal and family sacrifices to achieve organizational goals.
- Meet frequently to discuss their career development and learning needs.
- Assist them in creating individual career development plans.
- Challenge them to create a new job for themselves by identifying unmet needs or problems that their skills and strengths can help solve.

For Boomers (born 1946-1964):

- Train them in more a "hands-on" coaching style of management, including a focus on setting shorter-term goals for younger staff and rewarding small successes along the way to sustain their interest and engagement.
- Have them mentor technically competent Millennials and Gen-Xers who need to develop better interpersonal skills and political subtleties.
- Assign every Boomer manager to take on a Gen-Xer or Millennial to mentor and help them develop a career plan.
- Identify Boomer "early adopters" of newer technologies (who can usually relate better to their Boomer peers) and teach them more effectively than younger staff may be able to do
- Re-energize them by challenging them to learn new subjects, take on new projects that tap hidden strengths they have not previously used.
- Re-engage Boomers on the cusp of retirement by challenging them to pass on their knowledge and leave a legacy through mentorship.

For Traditionalists (born 1945 or before):

- Re-hire and retain them as part-time consultants, subject matter experts, mentors, and coaches as an alternative to full retirement.
- Tap their experience by assigning them to mentoring roles.
- Encourage other employees to communicate face to face and in a more personal way.
- Provide opportunities for them to learn new technologies from younger "reverse mentors" or from their more technologically literate Traditionalist peers.
- Re-engage those approaching retirement by challenging them to pass on their knowledge and leave a legacy through mentorship.

To promote overall Inter-Generational Understanding and Teamwork:

- Conduct multi-generational training where generational groups discuss how they would respond to specific conflict or miscommunication scenarios.
- Pair up staff from older and younger generations for monthly one-on-one meetings over coffee where they discuss questions such as "In what ways are you different than the stereotype of your generation?"

