

How to Attract and Retain Young Workers!

Over the next thirty years labor demand may outstrip supply by 35 million workers. This projection reflects labor demand based on the continuation 1980-2000 trend in output per capita. It is adjusted for labor productivity improvement based on 1980-2000 trend applied to Census middle case estimates of total population in future years and continuation of 2000 labor force participation rates and 2000 level of immigration and guest worker entry.

Closing the gap requires some combination of higher productivity growth, higher immigration or guest worker levels, and higher full-time equivalent labor force participation. Requirement includes irreducible minimum unemployment at 4%

Between 1970 and 2010 we will see significant growth in the working-age population. This pattern will be consistent throughout the world. Many countries, including Canada, are not producing enough workers to keep up with the demand.

To sustain economic growth changes will have to take place. These changes will affect both how work gets accomplished and also who and where work is performed.

Generation X is a term used to describe generations in many countries around the world. Generation X includes anyone born from 1961 to 1981 in North America. Following World War II, North America experienced an unusual spike in birth rates, a phenomenon commonly known as the baby boom. A baby boomer is a person born between 1946 and 1960.

- The population will shift from “baby boomers” in the workforce, to Genxers and, the fact is, that there are 45% less Genxers than “baby boomers”.

On top of that.....

- The average time in a job for North American workers under the age of 35 is 3 years and 80% stay less than 5 years and 1/3 of all under 35 year olds are in the first year with their employer

What do younger workers look for in their employment relationships? A cynic might say that young workers have not yet learned to lower their expectations. A progressive might counter that employers have not yet learned to meet their expectations, which eventually they must do. A realist might point out that there are simply many ways for employers to fail in the eyes of young workers, and failure spells turnover.

Young workers look for relative preferences among ten basic elements of the employment package. As with all workers, a comprehensive benefits package, with heavy emphasis on health-care coverage, tops the list. Young workers may be healthy, but they still value a benefits package, especially if they are starting families. Second, young workers value an enjoyable workplace more than mature workers do, and they even value it above “work that enables me to learn and grow.” They emphasize retirement packages least, perhaps because retirement seems far off, or perhaps because they doubt whether any retirement package will exist when they retire. Young workers place the highest relative weight on three items. They want a flexible work schedule, additional compensation, and additional paid vacation.

What matters to the younger worker

- Comprehensive benefits package (19%)
- Workplace that is enjoyable (13%)
- Work that enables me to learn and grow (12%)
- Comprehensive retirement package (10%)
- Work that is personally stimulating (10%)
- Flexible work schedule (10%)
- 10 percent more in total compensation (8%)
- Two additional weeks of paid vacation (7%)
- Work that is worthwhile to society (6%)
- Flexible workplace (5%)

Here are seven things to do to make your organization more attractive to the young worker.

1. Select candidates who have a strong fit to the job. In other words, put the right person in the right job – the first time.
2. Create opportunities that reduce turnover and increase the retention of top performers.
3. Maximize productivity and employee engagement through well developed training and coaching strategies. Get the most out of what you've got!
4. Insure against future retention challenges - use succession planning and job matching systems to plan individual career paths that take people beyond the 'three year hump'.
5. Use 360° multi-rater feedback systems to consistently monitor 'the pulse' of the employee / manager relationship. Young workers **demand** and **deserve** to be managed professionally.
6. Provide opportunities for open communication and dialog. Younger employees **expect** to have a forum for providing input and feedback
6. Determine the behavioral and working-style relationships of young workers and their managers, and use that information to create winning teams. Working styles and team dynamics vary dramatically in today's diverse workforce.

Written by: Margaret Miller



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905.659.5458