

Special Report on the Future of the Workplace

Retire old leadership habits and
retain your best people...

How to manage the generation gap at work

The notion of having one job for life does not appeal for the new generation of workers.

Those days are gone and unless companies are willing to invest in their people emotionally and financially, the best and brightest will unashamedly seek opportunities elsewhere, leaving you scrambling to replace them. In addition, although many skilled “baby boomers” (born 1946-1964) have already left the workforce, researchers are finding that a high percentage is in no hurry to retire. Advances in medical science have resulted in a longer life span and a healthier population of workers, allowing them to stay in the workforce longer. As a result, the participation rate for the youngest baby boomers will remain high for quite some time.

The difference in generational values can be understood as follows: The baby boomers grew up in a period of post-war economic growth and prosperity, remaining loyal to their employer. A job gave them a sense of meaning and identity. The recession of the 1980s and downsizing that followed left many looking for a job, questioning allegiances to their employers. Generation X (born 1965-1981) grew up in a “technology boom”, having witnessed their parents go through re-engineering, restructuring and higher unemployment rates. The technology revolution continues unabated for Generation Y, born after 1982. This generation has the



greatest educational opportunities than the preceding generations, possessing optimism and excitement about their future career prospects.

In this context, we face several dilemmas in terms of hiring and retention practices over the next ten to thirty years:

- ▶ Invest in the retraining of mature workers and re-think “compulsory retirement” policies
- ▶ Increase Generation Y opportunities and manage their expectations while keeping the older generation of skilled workers happy



- ▶ Develop hiring practices that take into account generational differences and cultural diversity without risking increased discrimination practices

How do we begin to solve such dilemmas? Employers will need to master exceptional interpersonal skills, develop a more flexible approach, rethink existing hiring, mentoring and training practices and let go of old ideas that shaped the traditional organizational structures. These are prerequisites for future success in managing our human capital.

The skills required to effectively lead this new generational mix will differ from the past as the traditional organizational structures continue to evolve, taking into account a more diverse working population; both in culture and age. With increasing labor shortages, businesses cannot afford to lose the skilled retiring worker without having a sound recruitment strategy. Leaders must be willing to reassess their biases and see themselves as lifelong learners who are able to facilitate change and humbly remain open-minded ... if they want all team members to be engaged and productive. Without effective management, your best people will not stay. In an increasingly complex world, people are motivated more by the simpler things; appreciation and a positive work environment. It all begins with the leadership they receive. 🍁

Michelle Ray

Michelle Ray, CEO of Walkabout Seminars International, is a keynote speaker, trainer and author. She is a Certified Speaking Professional, the highest-earned designation in the speaking profession held by less than 500 people worldwide. She was a keynote speaker at the recent CAPLA "Building Energy Together" Conference. Michelle is a motivation, retention and performance specialist who works with organizations to help improve morale, invigorate leaders and energize workplace relationships. Please visit her website: www.michelleray.com Email info@michelleray.com or call toll – free at 1 877 662 6187.