London Business School

Managing Organisational Behaviour
C108 A SPR13
Motivating Generation X vs Generation Y

How do you motivate the Millennials?

This article, based on a recent study, brings the concepts of motivation into the workplace: The fresh new talent coming into today's business are very different to their superiors. They are 'Gen Y-ers' and have a very different set of values to their superiors. Managers need to be aware, that while the frameworks of assessing and understanding their employees may not have changed, the elements and weights that Gen Y-ers assign to them are. Asset and wealth accumulation are out, fulfilling experiences, self-actualisation and happiness are in.

Managers need to be acutely aware these things have changed. While experts have promoted using intrinsic motivation and use of the BUC(K)ET model, these tools have now shot up in importance. Don't expect to motivate your next intern with cash, options or financial rewards – most will want freedom to travel, work flexibly and devote their time to an organisation that does social or environmental good, in addition to creating financial value. The workplace is changing. Fast.

Millennials Fail at Productivity and Why That's Not Necessarily Terrible[1]
By Arwen Petty, Published March 11, 2013

Dawdling has many forms. Reading the news. Scrolling through old YouTube videos and laughing at the outfits. ~~Stalking~~ researching your new cube neighbour on Facebook. With the continuously connected lifestyle that most of us lead today, our social lives are integrated with our professional meanderings more seamlessly than they've ever been, and studies show that this new type of productivity can be bad for business.

But different generations handle this digital synthesis in very different ways, and it has a noticeable impact on productivity. What we really want to know is who — Gen X, Millennials, or Baby Boomers — handles it poorly, and who wastes the most time at work.

The (Not at All Surprising) Truth

It's us. We did it. According to a recent study, Millennials (Gen Y) statistically waste up to four times as many hours at work than Boomers, and moreover, we're not even sorry about it. Gen Y-ers hold the philosophy that as long as the work gets done, it doesn't matter if it happened in between episodes of Girls and perusals of news feeds. We're hooked to our smartphones 24/7 anyway, and will likely answer your email about SEO reports at 3:00AM if we're up.

The work-life blending that today's younger employees exhibit is something unseen in generations before. Unlike Boomers, Millennials are much less tied to traditional hierarchies (we actually talk to the CEO), attire (jeans, every day), individual roles

---

[1] Article source: http://www.business2community.com/trends-news/millennials-fail-at-productivity-and-why-thats-not-necessarily-terrible-0432415

(collaboration is key) and even job feedback (we want it immediately, not in six months). That said, Gen X-ers are nearly as digitally savvy as Millennials, but pattern their work habits after Boomers, making them more effective in terms of personal time management but less open to change or working after-hours.

There is a payoff to all this freedom, though, and it's why the workforce shift will continue: you may catch your employees texting at their desks, but in return, you'll have an omnipresent pulse of ideas from people who're working for you because they want to, not just because they have to.

This Part Was a Little Surprising

Strangely enough, it isn't just the internet that's to blame for Gen Y slacking, or that's responsible for Boomers' greater attention spans, to whom the internet is still sometimes intimidating. Education actually plays a role, too.

As it turns out, workers with higher educations tend to slack off more. The theory is that, because people with degrees and doctorates tend to be promoted more often, they face less supervision at work and are therefore less accountable to their peers. At the same time, as these folks are typically managers, they're also usually Boomers, and are in charge of things like meetings, project delegation, and team role assignments.

Guess what the top four work-related time wasters are? Fixing other people's mistakes, office politics, waiting on coworkers to get stuff done, and (my personal favorite) meetings. All things that are generally in the hands of team leaders, who are directly responsible for knowing their employees' strengths and weaknesses, holding deadlines, and communicating issues.

Great Expectations and Why It'll All Be Okay

"Top-down, command-and-control is dead. Micro-management is dead. Orgs are becoming far more results-oriented, and more savvy at measuring those results. Underperformers will be weeded out naturally."

So wrote one dedicated Forbes reader, and it's certainly possible: being free to work as is necessary, coupled with new means of output measurement, boosts personal motivation and peer accountability. Past environmental and economic factors meant that Boomers and even Gen X-ers largely worked to provide. Today's younger workers care a little less about the paycheck, and instead value challenging jobs where they can partner with smart and interesting people. They'll dedicate themselves to succeeding in those environments, even if it means less job security. In fact, whereas older generations fought to keep jobs for upwards of 30 years, today's worker only stays at a single company for about 4.4. years.

Although procrastination and laziness will never be sought-after qualities, being overly strict about things like phones in the office or access to social media at work is a dangerous mistake. After all, progressive companies that seek to stay ahead of the curve should focus on hiring smarter, more ambitious people — not robots with nothing on their checklists but getting a check.