

Leadership Training: Tips for Leading Gen Y

This discussion is centred on the need and expectations of Gen Y employees in Australian organisations and what leaders can do to meet those requirements. Many leaders are at a loss of the constructive leadership approach to Gen Y and are looking for ways to effectively communicate, guide and inspire this unique generation. What are the leadership training methodologies that can help?

The Gen Y has made their mark! This new type of employee has been the cause of many management and leadership training challenges and few have truly understood what this generation needs and the thinking that goes behind what is seemingly is an unreasonable and unmanageable mindset.

From a leadership training perspective is imperative that leaders of different generations take the time to get inside the heads of their Gen Y employees and to get an understanding of what makes them tick.

Baby Boomers and Gen X leaders are cut from a different cloth. They are accustomed to principles such as proving yourself, climbing the corporate ladder, loyalty to their organisation, appreciation of opportunity and doing what it takes to get further in their own career paths.

These leaders believe they have earned the right to be at their current level of leadership and have a low sense of entitlement. They have got to their positions through sheer hard work, commitment and perseverance.

Now enter a generation who believe quite the opposite. A true test for leadership training professionals.

These leaders are being called to look beyond their own belief system into the realm of new and different ways of thinking.

Gen Y's however are not trying to be difficult. They have been brought up in a world that is fast moving. They have their finger on the pulse of changing technology and the internet gives them the information they require in a split second. They can access people around the world and send and receive vast amounts of data in any area of their choice.

This pace defines their lives. Anything slow is boring and anything uninspiring is not worth spending time on. Diversity is king and challenge is a "must have". If it takes too long, dump it!

Can a leadership training process make any meaningful difference to engage employees that think and behave in this way?

The answer is most certainly "Yes", however without the following key actions it may prove ineffective.

Here are 7 Leadership training suggestions that have proved to be successful;

1. Ensure that your Gen Y employees are involved in decision making.

As the leadership training guru Ken Blanchard claims, "People support and defend what they help create and decide."

2. Know their needs and expectations of;

- you as their leader
 - their team
 - their role
 - their career aspirations.
3. Give them ownership and autonomy

Gen Y employees want to feel a true sense of accomplishment. For this reason they do not feel a sense of loyalty to the organisation but rather to their jobs. Give them the opportunity to flourish in the path they would prefer to adopt.

4. Praise and acknowledge

They thrive on recognition and reward for a job well done. Many need this to feel alive and worthwhile.

5. Set up "buddy systems" and small teams

Gen Y's love to work collaboratively. Get them working together, talking and sharing.

6. Encourage creativity and innovation

Set up brainstorming groups for problem solving and invite suggestions and ideas for new and different approaches. Allow them freedom of expression.

7. Never be prescriptive

Gen Y detests being told what to do and how to do it. Rather be suggestive and avoid using any power style of management or leadership.

The case for leadership training is strong. There certainly is no one right approach and with time we will get to further understand and appreciate this wonderful and challenging generation.